



Crafting **Effective** CAREER DEVELOPMENT **Learning** STANDARDS

A Framework

June 2006



America's Career
Resources Network



National Training
Support Center

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Prepared for career development professionals

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INTRODUCTION

The *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 began a new era in American public education, an era grounded in the principle that rigorous learning standards form the cornerstone of education reform. The potential power of learning standards is undeniable. They provide a clear direction for what all students should know and be able to do. They establish clear expectations for schools, teachers, parents, and students. Today, learning standards are the foundation for curriculum, assessment, and accountability for virtually all kindergarten through Grade 12 students nationwide.

While *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) standards apply specifically to mathematics, reading, and science, its principles are also significant for career development education. However, as States work to make standards in academic content areas stronger, learning standards in the career development arena remain uneven, and sometimes non-existent, from State to State.

To maintain the relevance and credibility of career development programs in the eyes of constituents, practitioners, and policymakers, it is critical that States fortify these programs with learning standards that are as rigorous and up-to-date as their counterparts in reading, mathematics, and science.

The purpose of this paper is to help career development professionals meet the challenge of developing meaningful and effective career development learning standards (CDLS). The framework outlined here is designed to assist users in integrating the **structure** of NCLB academic standards with the **substance** of career clusters, Carl D. Perkins Act core indicators, and other relevant State career development content. Career development professionals should use these guidelines with the Four Pillars of *No Child Left Behind* in mind:

1. Scientifically-based Methods. The guidelines are research-based, and contain references and resources that can be consulted for further information. In addition, vignettes are provided throughout the document to describe processes and practices in use across the country.

2. Parent/Student Empowerment. The guidelines emphasize clear, jargon-free CDLS to allow all members of the community to understand the requirements, expectations, and responsibilities involved in their schools' career development programs. *CDLS are not meant to be exclusively for teachers and administrators.*

3. Local Flexibility. These guidelines are not intended to establish Federal requirements either for structure or content that all States must follow. Each State must analyze its own needs and develop a set of CDLS that makes sense in context. The framework in this document is intended to provide guidance, suggestions, examples, and resources for how States may choose to proceed.

4. Accountability. A fundamental principle of NCLB learning standards is that no standard is adequate unless it contains both content and achievement components. The framework outlined in these guidelines highlights the necessity of establishing each of these essential elements.

The framework is organized into two main sections. Part I describes the characteristics of effective CDLS and provides guidance on writing clear standards. Part II addresses the process for putting CDLS into practice and offers suggestions for planning an implementation strategy.

Special features of the guidelines include:

- **Sample** CDLS that include specific examples of each of the key elements of effective CDLS
- **Self-assessment** checklists to assist career development professionals in evaluating their progress during each phase of the process
- **Vignettes** and examples from existing State CDLS and Federal NCLB guidance describing practices across the country
- **Crosswalk** showing the linkages in content and structure among NCLB, career clusters, and effective CDLS

I. ELEMENTS OF A CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING STANDARD

The Nature of “Learning Standards”

At its most basic level, a learning standard describes what is expected of teachers and students in a given area of the curriculum mathematics, reading, science, or career development. In this sense, there is no difference between an “academic” learning standard (such as those mandated under NCLB) and a “career development” learning standard. To be truly rigorous, a learning standard of any type must offer a clear, well-organized description of specific outcomes expected at each level of complexity. In other words, a standard describes what students need to know and be able to do and what teachers need to teach to achieve success.

A note of caution on the nature of learning standards is important for users of this guidance document. As Charles Losh of the Center for Education and Training for Employment pointed out, “skill standards come in many sizes and shapes, have no consistent definitional base, and include diverse degrees of content” (Losh, 2000). Losh

(2000) states that based on various definitions of skill standards, “there is no common universally accepted definition” but that one would conclude that “a skill standard must include both content and performance elements.” While there are overarching principles that apply to any set of rigorous and effective learning standards, there is no magic, “one-size-fits-all” formula that every State can follow to create strong career development learning standards.

A CDLS Template

The CDLS template that is introduced on the following page is designed to help career development professionals place their own particular content into a structured framework that can be easily disseminated to the field. While the template does not represent a required format for all CDLS, it does provide an outline for capturing the essential elements of a meaningful and actionable standard. A sample Career Development Learning Standard is provided after the CDLS template. The sample CDLS provides an illustration of what a comprehensive, well-structured, jargon-free, NCLB-aligned standard might look like.

The remainder of this section, after the sample CDLS, describes in detail each of the elements of the template.

ACADEMIC LEARNING STANDARDS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)

The U.S. Department of Education’s NCLB guidance on standards and assessments makes it clear that a rigorous learning standard must have both content and achievement components:

Academic standards refer to statements of expectations for student learning and achievement. Academic standards are composed of standards for both content and student achievement.

Academic Content Standards: Academic content standards specify what all students are expected to know and be able to do. They must contain coherent and rigorous content and encourage the teaching of advanced subject matter.

Student Academic Achievement Standards: Academic achievement standards are explicit definitions of what students must know and be able to do to demonstrate proficiency. They further define content standards by connecting them to information that describes how well students are acquiring the knowledge and skills contained in academic content standards. Thus, it is essential that a State’s achievement standards be aligned with its content standards.

The Department’s guidance on Standards & Assessments can be found at:
www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/saaguidance03.doc.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING STANDARD TEMPLATE

Learning Standard #1:

Career Cluster:

Grade Level(s):

Topic #1:

CONTENT TO BE TAUGHT

Lesson Content

Curriculum Item #1

Curriculum Item #2

Curriculum Item #3

Links to NCLB Academic Content Standards

Link #1

Link #2

Link #3

Assessment Tools

Assessment Tool #1/Cut-off Scores

Assessment Tool #2/Cut-off Scores

Assessment Tool #3/Cut-off Scores

TEACHERS

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS TO BE DEMONSTRATED

Basic Level

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3

Proficient Level

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3

Advanced Level

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2

Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3

STUDENTS

SAMPLE: CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING STANDARD

Learning Standard #1: Students will know about the world of work, explore career options, and relate personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities to future career decisions.

Career Cluster: Applicable to all 16 Career Clusters

Grade Level(s): 9th Grade

Topic #1: Students will be able to analyze their personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities in relation to the 16 career clusters.

CONTENT TO BE TAUGHT

Lesson Content

Instructor will have students use a personal self-inventory assessment to determine personal skills, aptitudes and assessment abilities.

Instructor will have students explore the 16 career clusters and determine where their skills match one or several career clusters.

Instructor will have students prepare a summary of how their self-inventory assessment aligns with one or several of the 16 career clusters.

Links to NCLB Academic Content Standards

Algebra II (Standard 1)

English 9 (Standard 2.4, 5.6)

U.S. History (Standard 1.2, 4.1, 6.2)

Assessment Tools Sample student work provided to demonstrate "basic, proficient, and advanced" for portfolio and rubric. Final teacher observation checklist is provided to students and parents to demonstrate grading.

Portfolio (score range from 0-100)/Basic Level cut-off score of 70-80/100; Proficient Level cut-off score of 89-90/100; and Advanced Level cut-off score of 90-100/100.

Rubric (with scale of 1 to 5: 1=Unsatisfactory; 2=Poor; 3=Satisfactory, 4=Very Satisfactory, 5=Exemplary). Basic Level Cut-off score is a 3 (Satisfactory). Proficient Level cut-off score is a 4 (Very Satisfactory). Advanced Level cut-off score is a 5 (Exemplary).

Teacher Observation Checklist (10 item checklist). Basic Level cut-off score is meeting 7 or less items on the 10 item check list. Proficient Level cut-off score is meeting 8 or fewer items on the 10 item checklist. The Advanced Level cut-off score is meeting 9-10 out of the 10 item checklist.

TEACHERS

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS TO BE DEMONSTRATED

Basic Level

The student will be able to identify the 16 career clusters, and identify one or several that match their interests.

The student will be able to provide a basic summary (bullet points, a few sentences) of what he or she has learned.

Proficient Level

The student will be able to complete a general narrative summary of what he or she has learned from the self inventory assessment.

The student will be able to describe potential internships, volunteer opportunities, and academic course work that will allow him or her to explore the appropriate career clusters linked to their interests.

Advanced Level

The student (with assistance from guidance counselor and/or teacher) contacts potential internships, volunteer opportunities, and identifies academic course work that matches the career cluster(s) that he or she has identified as matching his or her interests.

The student will be able to prepare a detailed comprehensive summary that demonstrates a clear understanding of how his or her personal skills and abilities aligned to potential careers and appropriate career clusters.

STUDENTS

Essential Elements of a CDLS

The CDLS template contains three main sections:

- The overarching *learning standard* provides the general instructional goal in clear and broad terms. The learning standard is composed of two basic elements, a content standard and an achievement standard.
- The *content standard* describes the specific curriculum students need to know and for which teachers are responsible to teach. Content standards provide a substantive framework for building lesson plans and a basis for developing effective assessment tools.
- The *achievement standard* (sometimes referred to as a “performance” standard) describes the performance expected of students. Achievement standards clearly state what a student should know and be able to do and identify the means for assessing progress toward established benchmarks.

Research on effective learning standards across a wide variety of disciplines has consistently shown that both content and achievement components are essential to constructing an effective learning standard (Losh, 2000). NCLB requires that all State academic standards include both of these elements.

Unfortunately, many current standards in the career development domain tend to focus heavily on content or what students need to know while neglecting to establish clear achievement benchmarks. The consequences of such an approach can be serious. Researchers Chester Finn, Michael Petrilli, and Gregg Vanourek have found that, “vague standards are bound to serve as a barrier rather than a ladder to achievement.” (Finn, et al., 1998)

In the sections that follow, each element of the template is discussed in detail including guidelines for crafting effective and meaningful standards.

The Learning Standard

The top section of the CDLS template displays information on the overarching learning standard. It is designed to provide a *succinct description of a single broad goal for student learning*.

This portion of the template is composed of four parts:

Learning Standard #1:	
	Career Cluster:
	Grade Level(s):
	Topic #1:

- **Learning Standard.** Crafting the overarching learning standard successfully is imperative to building a rigorous and effective CDLS. This statement should reflect a broad, general goal that can be easily understood by all stakeholders not merely administrators and teachers, but also students, parents, local businesses, community organizations, and any other entity interested in career development education. The learning standard should not identify specific teaching strategies or a narrow student achievement indicator (that is the purpose of the remainder of the template), but it should clearly define a core expectation for the career development curriculum. Overly vague or jargon-laden standards will undermine the more specific information that follows.

SNAPSHOT: A TENNESSEE LEARNING STANDARD

Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

(Tennessee, Grade Level 9-12, Standard 4: Career Awareness and Employment Readiness Skills)

www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cistandards2001/guidance/cicounseling.htm

- **Career Cluster.** A career cluster is a grouping of occupations and broad industries, based on shared and common characteristics. The U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEC) use 16 career clusters, which chart pathways from high school to two- and four-year colleges, graduate school, and the workplace. In some cases, individual States have developed their own set of career clusters. New York State, for example, has identified six. Regardless of which set of career clusters is used, a single, meaningful CDLS should identify which career cluster a learning standard addresses. In general, a single CDLS should be focused enough so that it relates to only one career cluster at a time, although for basic career development skills it is possible that a CDLS might apply to all clusters simultaneously. For example, New York State's Learning Standard One for Career and Occupational Studies states, "Students will be knowledgeable about the world of work, explore career options, and relate personal skills, aptitudes, and abilities to future career decisions." This standard applies to all 16 career clusters and also to New York's six career clusters. (A full listing of the 16 career clusters can be found online at: www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.htm. New York's Learning Standards for Career Development and Occupational Standards can be found at: www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/pub/cdoslea.pdf.)
- **Grade Level(s).** In a truly rigorous learning standard, it should be clear what is expected of students by the end of each grade, and there should be no duplication

of identical content from year to year. To the extent possible, a single CDLS should specify one grade level for each set of content and achievement standards. This is preferable to providing "grade bands" because, ultimately, material will need to be taught at a specific grade level. Teachers, students, and parents all benefit from a clear description not only of what will be taught, but when the instruction should occur.

Attempting to shape content so that it will fit a wide range of grades simultaneously is very likely to lead to vague or ill-defined standards that will be difficult to interpret or measure. Using grade bands instead of single grades also poses problems in formulating achievement standards, since the achievement benchmarks expected (and assessment tools used) at one grade level will typically be inappropriate at other grade levels.

- **Topic.** In many cases, a learning standard will be broad enough to encompass a number of different topics. Where appropriate, each of these distinct topics should be described separately (although under the same learning standard), with a full set of distinct content and achievement standards. The Pennsylvania vignette below demonstrates one way that this can be done. Knowing when to break out a separate topic under a single learning standard is an art, not a science each set of CDLS will require its own judgment. In general, however, each topic should represent a discrete knowledge or skill related to the overarching learning standard. A topic that is too broad will likely result in difficulties in identifying specific lessons and measurable performance assessments. However, including details that are too narrow can

SNAPSHOT: A PENNSYLVANIA TOPIC

Analyze entrepreneurship as it relates to personal career goals and corporate opportunities.

(Pennsylvania, Grade Level 11, Standard 13.4: Proposed Academic Standards for Career Education and Work, still going through State approval process as of June 23, 2006) www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/lib/stateboard_ed/Onedocumentfinal.pdf

result in an unmanageable number of different topics under one standard. Details of this sort might instead be placed in curriculum guides or other teaching materials.

Content Standards

Once the overarching learning standard has been described and a specific topic for instruction has been identified, the content of the material to be taught must be outlined. The middle portion of the template contains information that teachers need to prepare relevant and appropriate lessons that will result in students gaining the desired knowledge and skills.

This portion of the template is composed of three parts:

CONTENT TO BE TAUGHT	
TEACHERS	Lesson Content
	Curriculum Item #1
	Curriculum Item #2
	Curriculum Item #3
	Links to NCLB Academic Content Standards
	Link #1
	Link #2
	Link #3
	Assessment Tools
	Assessment Tool #1/Cut-off Scores
	Assessment Tool #2/Cut-off Scores
	Assessment Tool #3/Cut-off Scores

- **Lesson Content.** To ensure that all students have a fair and equal opportunity to meet their achievement standards, a single CDLS should include clear and specific expectations for the content that must be taught. It is important that a CDLS provide guidance to teachers on the curriculum, materials, and pedagogy that are appropriate to teaching the content required by the learning standard. Though it should not reach the level of detail of a complete day to day “lesson plan,” the lesson content section should contain the most detailed description of each CDLS for use in a classroom setting. While the template shows a sample in which three curriculum items are listed, an actual CDLS might have a greater or lesser number. It might also use a different format to describe the particular expectations for teaching lesson content.

- **Links to NCLB Academic Content Standards.** Under NCLB, every State has established a formal set of academic learning standards in mathematics, reading, and science (and, in some cases, in other subjects as well). Frequently, a single CDLS can be linked to related academic standards, information that is extremely helpful as teachers develop their daily lesson plans. Wherever relevant, a single CDLS should clearly identify these links, including specific citations and references to the location of the related academic standards in the State’s NCLB documentation. (For example, see the Michigan vignette below.) Connecting a CDLS to an NCLB academic standard will help to highlight the rigor and relevance of each CDLS for

SNAPSHOT: MICHIGAN’S LINK TO NCLB

Michigan’s Career and Employability Skills Content Standards & Benchmarks, Standard 10, High School Level: All students will integrate employability skills into behaviors which prepare one for obtaining, maintaining, advancing, and changing employment.

- **Benchmark 9** calls for students to “Identify avenues for conducting a job search (e.g. network, employment agencies, Internet, Michigan Works!, etc.)
- **Listed under the Standard/Benchmark are the links to meeting the Michigan English Language Arts (ELA) standards: 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11.**

teachers, students, parents, businesses, and the community. This section of the template provides space for three such links. In practice, however, a single CDLS may have any number of links.

- **Assessment Tools.** A content standard is meaningless without details for teachers, parents, and the community on how it will be determined that students have in fact achieved (or not achieved) it. The “Assessment Tools” portion of the template is designed to provide information on the methods to be used for measuring student progress. All stakeholders should know, in advance, precisely what the assessment tool will be and what the specific cut-off scores are that separate the different levels of achievement from one another (see the following section for a full discussion of achievement levels). Assessment tools may take many forms, including tests, portfolios, rubrics, teacher observation, and evaluation. The critical point is that the CDLS must clearly identify the nature of the assessment and the definition of “success,” so that all students and teachers have a fair opportunity to prepare for and meet the required standard.

Achievement Standards

Describing the content that teachers are expected to cover in the classroom is only one element of creating an effective, meaningful CDLS. A clear learning standard must also include explicit student achievement standards that describe what students will achieve as a result of the instruction they receive. The final section of the template describes specific achievement benchmarks for knowledge and skills to be gained at each designated proficiency level.

This portion of the template is divided into sections that describe knowledge and skill benchmarks at each achievement level. In the case of CDLS, the number of achievement levels and benchmarks along with the specific labels for each level will vary from State to State. The template is modeled after the minimum basic requirements for academic achievement standards under NCLB, which mandate that States institute at least three

COMPONENTS OF NCLB ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

The U.S. Department of Education describes the key elements of a rigorous set of academic achievement below.

Academic achievement standards should be conceptualized as a system that includes the following components:

Achievement levels: Labels for the levels of student achievement that convey the degree of student achievement in a given content area. Each achievement level encompasses a range of student achievement.

Achievement descriptors: Descriptions of the competencies associated with each level of achievement. Achievement descriptors describe what students at each achievement level know and can do.

Exemplars: Examples of student work that illustrate the range of achievement in a content area within each achievement level.

Cut scores: Scores on an assessment that separate one level of achievement from another.

The Department's guidance on standards & assessments can be found at: www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/saaguidance03.doc

proficiency levels. Such levels are typically labeled “advanced,” “proficient,” and “basic,” where “basic” refers to the lowest acceptable achievement level. However, States have flexibility in naming their three levels of achievement. Maine, for example, uses “exceeds standards,” “meets standards,” and “partially meets standards.” Some States, such as Louisiana, have created

five student academic achievement levels: “advanced,” “proficient,” “basic,” “approaching basic,” and “unsatisfactory.” The U.S. Department of Education requires that, if more than three levels are instituted, this does not result in lower expectations for students served by the Title I program of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965. Please visit:

http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/ncbreference/page_pg4.html#titlei for more information.

ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS TO BE DEMONSTRATED	
STUDENTS	Basic Level
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3
	Proficient Level
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3
	Advanced Level
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #1
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #2
	Knowledge/Skill Benchmark #3

The following are key characteristics of an effective set of achievement standards:

- **Link Directly to Assessment Tools.** Effective achievement standards should be related seamlessly to the assessment tools that are used to measure students' results (see the previous section for a full discussion of assessment tools). This means that the development of achievement standards must take into consideration how student performance will be measured. Achievement benchmarks that cannot be measured are, ultimately, meaningless. When crafted skillfully, an achievement standard and its accompanying assessment tool can be used for grading and performance reporting.

- **Use Precise, Jargon-Free Language.** As with all the elements of an effective CDLS, it is crucial that the student achievement standards be written in plain, basic language. Not only will administrators and teachers be interested in knowing precisely what skills and knowledge students should be gaining, but also students, parents, business leaders, community organizations, and other stakeholders. Technical jargon, educational terms, and other specialized terminology should be avoided. In addition, benchmarks should be defined as precisely and clearly as possible. There should be no room for interpretation as to what a student needs to know and do to meet a certain achievement standard.

- **Provide Concrete Models of Performance.** An effective achievement benchmark includes specific, real-world examples of what constitutes “achievement” at a given proficiency level. Providing a sample of work that fits each level gives students and parents a target that they can use to gauge expectations. It also gives teachers and administrators a model that they can use to judge students' achievement. Supplying concrete models of achievement also helps to ensure that all students will be assessed fairly against a common benchmark, by creating a common understanding of what it means to be “proficient” or “advanced.” To ensure that content and achievement standards are rigorously and objectively crafted, pre-determined benchmarks must be used to inform judgments on student work, rather than the reverse. CDLS developers should identify and describe student work samples at each achievement level only after an assessment tool and cut-off score have been established.

- **Make Meaningful Distinctions Among Grade Levels.** As discussed above, it is best if a CDLS specifies one grade level for each set of content and achievement standards. Because teachers must teach and students must learn in one particular grade level at any given moment, standards will be most useful if they are tailored to be grade-specific. A single “K-4” standard, for example, would imply that a fourth grade teacher and a kindergarten teacher would teach the same content

and kindergartners would be expected to produce the same level of work as fourth graders. A standard vague enough to apply to both kindergartners and fourth graders will almost inevitably be open to such a wide degree of interpretation and experimentation from classroom to classroom that any “achievement standard” would lose its power to provide meaningful information to parents, businesses, and the community at large. In breaking content and achievement standards out by grade level, it is also important to ensure that each grade level’s standards relate in a cumulative fashion to previous grade levels’ standards. Each succeeding level should build on the achievement benchmarks from prior years in a logical, realistic fashion.

- **Make Meaningful Distinctions Among Proficiency Levels.** In addition to making meaningful distinctions in achievement benchmarks

across grade levels from year to year, it is equally important that clear differences exist in the proficiency levels within each individual grade. In a system that includes “basic,” “proficient,” and “advanced,” for example, there should be easily identifiable, qualitative differences in both the knowledge/skill descriptions and the models of student work. The goal of an effective CDLS should be to leave as little room for interpretation as possible as to what constitutes evidence of achievement at a particular level. Vague or overlapping achievement benchmarks create great potential for inconsistent and unfair assessments of student achievement and cause confusion among students and the public as to what constitutes a successful outcome.

SNAPSHOT: A LOOK AT HOW HAWAII’S CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION STANDARDS LINK TO ASSESSMENTS AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Hawaii’s Career and Technical Education Standards - Standard 2, Strand 2, Career Portfolio Development states that students will: **Explore and understand educational and career options in order to develop and implement personal, educational, and career goals. As part of this standard, Benchmark CTE.9-12.2.4 states that teachers will:** “Assess career portfolio that documents evidence of progress toward the attainment of personal, educational, and career goals.”

Standard 2, Strand 2 then provides a sample performance assessment that states: The student evaluates and modifies career portfolio, written plan, CD, or website to update earlier education and career plans and includes goal statements, actions, and experiences (e.g. volunteer work, education, resume(s), references, work samples, certificates or awards, records of attendance, and transcripts).

The standard/assessment tool then provides a rubric breakdown to provide teachers with a rubric for assessing student proficiency according to Hawaii’s four proficiency levels: Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Novice.

- **Advanced Level:** Assess, in great detail, career portfolio that documents evidence of progress toward the attainment of personal, educational, and career goals
- **Proficient Level:** Assess, in detail, career portfolio that documents evidence of progress toward the attainment of personal, educational, and career goals
- **Partially Proficient:** Assess, in some detail, career portfolio that documents evidence of progress toward the attainment of personal, educational, and career goals
- **Novice:** Assess, in minimal detail, career portfolio that documents evidence of progress toward the attainment of personal, educational, and career goals

Hawaii’s Career and Technical Education Standards can be accessed at:
<http://standardstoolkit.k12.hi.us/index.html>.

- **Apply Achievement Standards Equally to All**

Students. A key pillar of NCLB is that all students (except those with the most severe cognitive and academic disabilities) should be held to the same rigorous academic standards. Ultimately, this is the core principle upon which standards-based learning rests. Just as learning standards should not be designed to allow some students to “get by” with lesser achievement, CDLS should aspire to reach every student with the same rigorous course content. In addition to making it difficult to craft a clear set of standards, establishing different achievement standards for different “types” of students serves as an obstacle to reaching their full potential.

II. IMPLEMENTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING STANDARDS (CDLS)

Part I of this document described in detail the elements of writing an effective Career Development Learning Standard. Part II will discuss the process of putting a set of such standards into practice. In implementing CDLS, three steps are essential.

- **Assess current standards.** Where they exist, current CDLS should be examined before new ones are developed. An assessment of existing standards is likely to reveal weaknesses, inconsistencies, or omissions that will not serve students well in the NCLB era.
- **Develop new standards.** Career development professionals will need to engage a variety of stakeholders in the process of revising old standards and creating new ones. Involving policymakers and the wider community in CDLS development is essential to implementing successfully.
- **Disseminate and monitor standards.** New CDLS will be effective only if stakeholders know about them and if they are used in the classroom. The implementation process must include sound communication strategies and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Assessing Career Development Learning Standards

A number of States have a set of CDLS already in place. However, in many cases these standards pre-date NCLB and may be in need of revision to ensure that they meet the career development learning needs of all students.

Taking periodic stock of current State CDLS is an important step in ensuring that goals remain relevant, content remains rigorous, and assessments remain appropriate. Career development professionals should evaluate all career development standards that may already exist, to assess whether they meet the current needs of students, teachers, and the community.

The CDLS template and sample CDLS presented in Part I of this document provide an example of what a comprehensive, well-structured, jargon-free, NCLB-aligned CDLS standard might look like. This section contains two additional resources for career development professionals and other stakeholders to use as they examine their existing CDLS.

- **The Learning Standards Crosswalk: From NCLB to CDLS.** For States seeking to align their CDLS with the principles of NCLB, the crosswalk describes the links among NCLB, career clusters, and the elements of an effective CDLS outlined in Part I of this document.
- **CDLS Self-Assessment Checklist.** Whether evaluating existing CDLS or considering new ones, the summary checklist provides a quick reference to key elements of a strong CDLS.

Helpful information on what to look for in a good standard may also be found by examining other State CDLS, NCLB academic standards, the content of relevant standardized assessments, and research from organizations working in the burgeoning field of standards-based education.

THE LEARNING STANDARDS CROSSWALK: FROM NCLB TO CDLS

THE FOUR PILLARS OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND		NCLB Academic Learning Standards	Career Clusters	Career Development Learning Standards
		CONTENT STANDARDS		
	Scientific-ly-based Methods	Emphasize rigorous, challenging skills and knowledge in content area	Pool of general career-related knowledge and skill definitions relates to 16 broad career clusters	Use career cluster knowledge and skills as the basis for rigorous career development content standards
		Provide teachers with proven, effective direction to guide their instruction		Provide teachers with specific, straightforward career development standards to help guide their instruction
	Parent/ Student Empowerment	Give students a clear picture of expectations, to guide their performance	Each of the 16 clusters outlines clear, easy-to-understand career pathways	Give students a clear picture of skill and knowledge expectations for each career cluster
		Provide parents and community jargon-free standards, to guide their expectations		Provide parents and community with jargon-free statements of the skills and knowledge required for each cluster
	Local Flexibility	Tailor standards to be course-specific and/or grade-specific	Required knowledge and skills link to specific sets of occupations within each pathway	Tailor career development standards to be course-specific and/or grade-specific
		ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS		
		Define at least three achievement levels, described by specific competencies associated with each	Wide variety of clusters and pathways is conducive to flexible use at the local level	Directly align career development achievement standards with State and local content standards
		Illustrate the range of achievement in a given level through actual examples of student work		Describe clearly what students must know and be able to do to demonstrate proficiency in each cluster
	Accountability	Assign "cut scores" on assessments that define different achievement levels	Knowledge and skill descriptions illustrate the abilities and proficiencies needed for each pathway and occupation	Define objective measures that will be used to assess student achievement
		Apply achievement standards equally to all students except those with severe cognitive/ academic disabilities		Apply achievement standards equally to all students except those with severe cognitive/academic disabilities

CDLS SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

DOES YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING STANDARD:

- ☐ Include an overarching goal, clear content standard(s), and specific achievement standard(s)?
- ☐ State its basic learning goal in broad language that is easily understood by students, parents, and the community?
- ☐ Identify which of the 16 career clusters it addresses?
- ☐ Specify the grade level at which it will be taught?
- ☐ Provide teachers with specific information that will help them plan their daily classroom instructional activities?
- ☐ Link to particular academic learning standards under *NCLB*?
- ☐ Describe the assessment tool that will be used to measure whether students succeed in achieving the standard?
- ☐ Outline student achievement expectations in clear, jargon-free language accessible to students, parents, and the community?
- ☐ Illustrate expected student performance using specific examples of work at each designated proficiency level?
- ☐ Make clear, meaningful distinctions among grade levels?
- ☐ Make clear, meaningful distinctions among proficiency levels?
- ☐ Apply achievement standards equally to all students?

The Process of Developing and Revising Career Development Learning Standards

In many cases, an assessment of existing CDLS will reveal a need for revisions particularly where standards were developed before the NCLB era. This step in CDLS implementation, which can range in scope from minor updates to a complete overhaul, requires an understanding of State policy processes and active engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders. It is not enough to write a perfectly crafted CDLS that adheres to all of the principles in Part I of this guidance. To be implemented effectively, the CDLS must be shepherded through a policy and vetting process that will vary from State to State. Therefore, it is important to consider the process that each State will use in developing or revising its State CDLS.

In many States, final decision-making authority for developing or revising CDLS rests outside the career development professionals purview. For example, a Board of Regents may be in charge of the process and must approve the proposed new or modified standards. In other States, career development professionals will have more direct implementation authority. A critical question, therefore, becomes, "What State or local entity has the responsibility for approving the State CDLS, and what entities have been designated to oversee the development and revision process of State CDLS?" The answer to this question must be considered carefully as approaches and resource allocation for CDLS creation or revision are developed. State CDLS revision teams should take into account their State specific statutes, governing bodies, advisory committees, public comment periods, and additional regulatory guidance before they can produce final State-approved CDLS.

Regardless of where final authority rests for approving CDLS, career development professionals should work to ensure that input into the new standards is received from key stakeholders and the public at large. An important

theme found throughout the literature on effective standards development is a focus on obtaining diverse stakeholder input. Soliciting comments from a diverse range of constituents throughout the development process, from local districts to the State level, can help ensure that a comprehensive range of issues is considered before standards are adopted. As was noted in Part I of this guidance, an effective set of CDLS should not be designed for an audience composed exclusively of administrators and teachers. It must incorporate the needs of a much wider community. Potential stakeholders would include: teachers, administrators, parents, guidance

The following are examples of how policy and legislation can influence the development, revision, and implementation of State CDLS.

- In Tennessee, the Tennessee School Counseling and Career Guidance Standards had to address the needs outlined in the educational reform agenda articulated by the State Board of Education's Master Plan for Tennessee Schools.
- In Pennsylvania, the State is currently waiting for its State CDLS to be approved through the Independent Regulatory Review Commission process. In order for the State CDLS to be "final," there is a lengthy review process that involves public meetings, staff review, and a checklist for the delivery and submission of proposed regulations and public comments.
- In Texas, the "Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Career Orientation is written into the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II, Chapter 127, an example of a State implementing CDLS as specific to its State statute.
- In Wyoming, the Wyoming Career/Vocational Education Content and Performance Standards development and revision process was overseen by the Wyoming State Board of Education.
- In Michigan, the State Board of Education was in charge of approving the revised Career and Employability Skills Content Standards and Benchmarks. It is important to note that the Michigan Business Leaders for Education Excellence were significantly involved in recommending revisions.

counselors (from all levels: elementary, middle school, and secondary), curriculum coordinators, businesses, outside experts, community organizations, State Department of Education, university and/or community college representatives, general public, and advisory groups.

Appropriate venues and times for public review and comments must be considered in putting together a CDLS development process. Once State CDLS are drafted, they should be reviewed not only by those involved closely with the process, but also by outside experts and the general public.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE WYOMING CAREER/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CONTENT AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Beginning in 2000, the State of Wyoming began its Career Development Learning Standards development process. Wyoming's Career Development Learning Standards established the Wyoming Career/Vocational Education Standards Committee and developed its standards using the following process:

- Utilized findings from the U.S. Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS Report) and regional meetings to develop a framework for state standards.
- During 2000-2001, representatives from each of the state districts participated in regional groups along with community college, university, students, and business representatives.
- At the regional meetings, participants compiled drafts using local district standards.
- The state committee (consisting of regional representatives) utilized the regional documents to draft the state standards. This included using national standards and several state standards to establish the rigor of Wyoming's state career development learning standards.
- In 2002-2003, a writing committee was convened to review and revise these standards.

www.k12.wy.us/eqa/nca/pubs/standards/voced.pdf

REVISION OF STATE LEARNING STANDARDS (CDLS) – TENNESSEE

In Tennessee, there was a need to consider a variety of stakeholders. The Department's guidance on Standards & Assessments (2003) describes the need for the State learning standard process to be coordinated with broad-based community groups. In Tennessee, a writing committee made up of 33 Tennessee school counselors, teachers, administrators, parents, curriculum coordinators, community members, and State department personnel revised the State CDLS. Committee members were from all districts, and counselors represented the elementary, middle school and secondary levels. Additionally, representatives from public and private universities such as Tennessee State University, Austin Peay State University, and Vanderbilt University served on the committee. Even business was represented (Memphis RedBirds Baseball). The committee organized the standards to reflect the nine standards in the National Standards for School Counseling Programs developed by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

The next page provides a checklist for States to use in determining how prepared they are to begin the process of development and/or revision.

CDLS DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION CHECKLIST

DOES YOUR PROPOSED CDLS DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION PROCESS INCLUDE:

- ☐ Conducting a needs analysis?
- ☐ Obtaining a set of national, State, or business-industry skills standards?
- ☐ Allowing for input from the public?
- ☐ Establishing a program advisory committee?
- ☐ Reviewing skills standards set to identify career development content?
- ☐ Developing an assessment process and instrumentation?
- ☐ Developing, adapting or adopting instructional materials?
- ☐ Convening a cross section of stakeholders to participate in the process? Including working with outside experts?
- ☐ Debating and refining numerous drafts of standards?
- ☐ Reviewing and revising curriculum and CDLS on an ongoing basis?
- ☐ Considering what policy review process your State will have, and the impact it will have on the CDLS development and review process?

Disseminating and Monitoring Career Development Learning Standards

Once a set of CDLS has been developed or revised through a systematic and organized process that involves a sphere of diverse stakeholders, the next step is to ensure that the CDLS are implemented at the local level. No matter how well-written and comprehensive a set of CDLS is, it will be effective in helping to improve student achievement only if teachers know what the standards are and use them to guide instruction in the classroom. This occurs only when the career development professional (whether it be a counselor, teacher, etc.), students, and parents are thoroughly cognizant of their responsibilities and performance expectations. The “buy-in” and commitment to implementation by teachers, guidance counselors, parents, students, and other stakeholders can occur only if there is a solid implementation plan that includes both an outreach strategy and an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process.

For CDLS to be successful, key stakeholders must know what they contain and understand how they will work. A carefully planned dissemination strategy is, therefore, essential to the implementation process. Below are factors to consider in planning the dissemination of CDLS.

- Involve stakeholders, educators, and citizens who participated in the process to create plans to disseminate, review, and implement the CDLS.
- Consider the demographics of your State, and focus on the best possible way for these new or revised CDLS to be disseminated to various populations. Are there different techniques or delivery methods that you would use with different populations, such as rural or inner-city, English language learners, minority groups, etc?
- Consider whether you want to target counselors, teachers, parents, students, or other stakeholders. In some cases you may want to target all populations at once, and in other cases the most effective strategy may be to target only selected populations at first.
- Conduct in-service training on the new standards. This training would be with counselors and teachers who will ultimately be incorporating the standards into their classrooms.
- Look for opportunities in already scheduled meetings, conferences, and trainings where there may be room for training and dissemination on the new CDLS. Consider annual State conferences, regional conferences, district meetings, professional development opportunities, and other speaking and sharing scenarios where stakeholders would be present to learn more about the CDLS. For an example of an implementation plan that involves training at meetings and conferences, please see the Michigan Implementation box on this page.

MICHIGAN IMPLEMENTATION

To implement Michigan's latest Career Counseling Standards, the State is conducting six counselor/educator conferences to walk them through the standards. Counselors are showing teachers how to incorporate the standards into their classes. This includes incorporating standards into freshman orientation seminars, and career portfolios. The State worked with a variety of stakeholders including elementary, middle school, high school counselors, retired people, counseling groups, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and the Michigan ASCA throughout the revision and implementation process.

- Develop training agendas and train-the-trainer materials, and make copies of the new standards easily available to stakeholders preferably both on-line and in hard copy formats. If your State plans to disseminate copies of the standards to large numbers of people, plan for appropriate resource allocation (time, staff, materials). If resources are limited, consider posting the standards on State Web sites, and making copies available in both PDF and Word to computer users. Many States have their current standards available on their State education agency Web sites.

- Consider using presentations, trainings, reports, brochures, an executive summary, newsletters and tabloids, or journal articles to reach an audience beyond the educator community. Presentations at national conferences, or even television and newspaper interviews, can be cost-effective methods for reaching large numbers of people.

Another essential component of any CDLS implementation process is the development of an evaluation plan that describes how the success of the CDLS will be monitored on an ongoing basis. The evaluation plan should clearly state the CDLS goals and objectives, based on the needs of stakeholders in particular, students. Based on those goals and objectives, it is necessary to lay out a specific strategy for measuring whether the new or revised CDLS are being incorporated into the classroom as envisioned, and if they are yielding satisfactory outcomes in student performance and teaching methods. The evaluation process should be purposeful and systematic. It should involve a careful collection and analysis of information that can be used to document the effectiveness and impact of programs, establish accountability, and identify areas for change and improvement. Through a well-planned monitoring and evaluation process, career development professionals will be able to:

- Document the outcomes of implementing new or revised CDLS;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the CDLS;
- Improve the CDLS by analyzing results and implementing program changes on an ongoing basis;
- Justify the investment of time, money, and labor spent on developing and revising the CDLS; and
- Meet local, State, and federal accountability measures such as those outlined in NCLB or the Perkins Act.

An example of an evaluation process, including how to conduct data collection and analysis activities, can be found at: www.acrnetwork.org/evaluation.

RESOURCES

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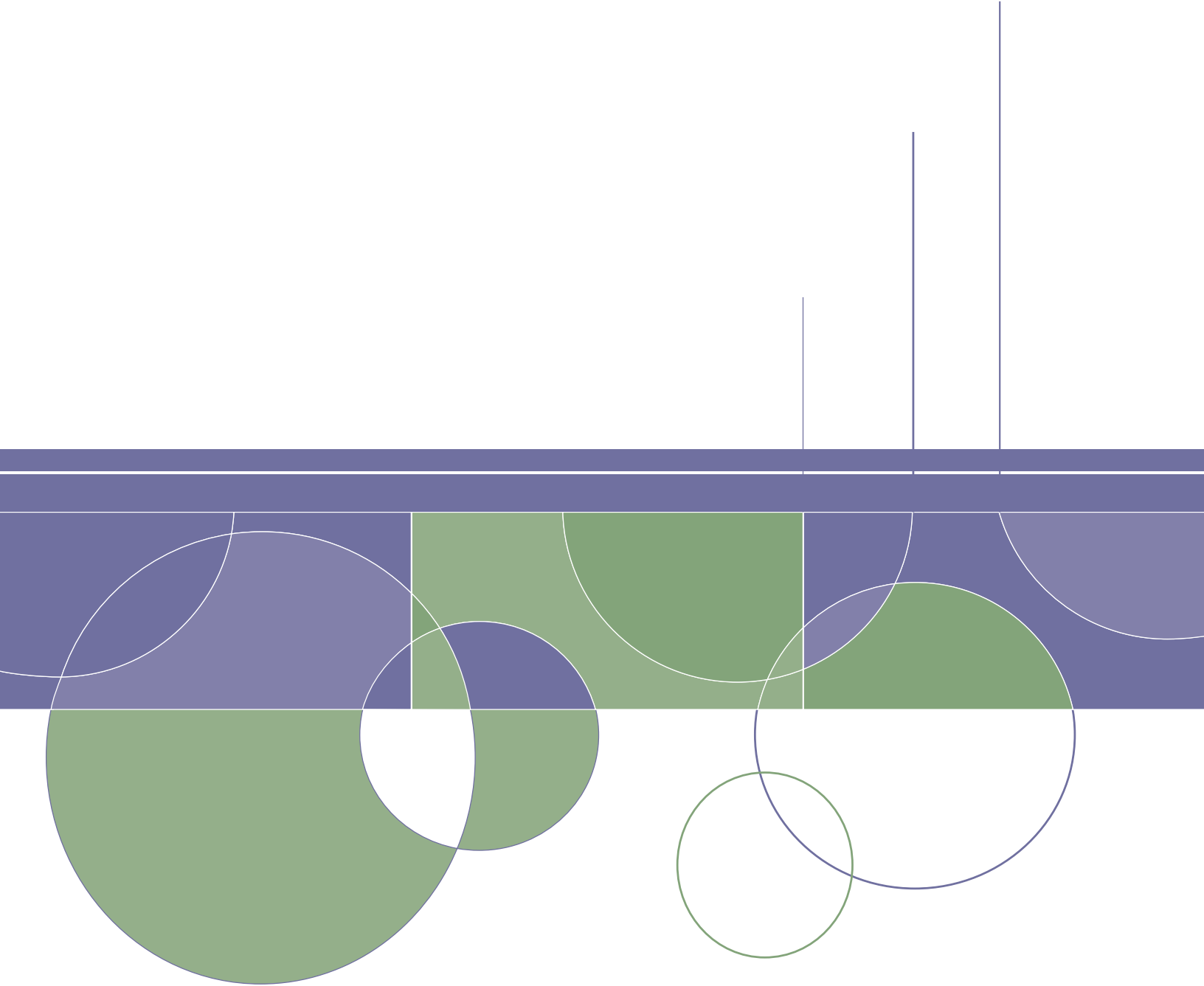
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National Training
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America's Career
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